

Ready For RAPI REACTION

Story by Heike Hasenauer



The Allied Rapid Reaction Corps is headquartered in Mönchengladbach, Germany, not far from Cologne.

Jason Lefevre

DN

RECENT months of heightened world tension resulting from the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks have kept the 450-member Allied Command, Europe, Rapid Reaction Corps on constant high alert.

Stationed at Rheindahlen Military Complex in Mönchengladbach, Germany, the ARRC is NATO's only multinational and rapid-reaction corps. It's trained, equipped and ready to deploy to any hotspot where NATO interests are at stake; within 48 hours its lead elements can pave the way for other initial-entry forces, including the entire ARRC headquarters. It would then assume the role of corps headquarters, with up to four divisions under its control, or become a land-component command headquarters for crisis-management contingencies, said ARRC spokesman MAJ Barry Johnson.

"We do a lot of NATO contingency planning all the time," added LTC John Williams, the ARRC's main attack-helicopter operations planner.

The ARRC's 300 officers represent 17 NATO-member nations and are assigned throughout the headquarters' staff sections, said LTC Jeff Brown, deputy fire-support coordinator. About 30 U.S. officers complement the group. Ten Army enlisted soldiers perform administrative and other support functions.



MSG Jeff Vandevaerst makes maps from data collected from a variety of sources in the United States, Britain and Germany.
Heike Hasenauer



Helke Hasenauer

SGT Ken Orrock, a member of NATO's only multinational counterintelligence team, is one of several enlisted soldiers who hold critical ARRC positions.

In each individual area of expertise — air operations, fire support, security, and training and exercise, among others — ARRC teams coordinate, synchronize and integrate their nations' collective military assets to create the most appropriate force for a particular contingency, Williams said.

"There's no looming military threat to NATO in Europe, as existed during the Cold War," said counterintelligence special agent SGT Ken Orrock.

Until the terrorist attack on America, the biggest threat was in Macedonia, followed by Kosovo and Bosnia.

"Today, it's the terrorist threat," he said. "What most people haven't been aware of until recently is that there's an increase in human intelligence-gathering against the United States and NATO, much more so than during the Cold War."

The counterintelligence team, composed of American, British,

Belgian and Dutch agents, counters espionage and terrorism, Orrock said.

"We monitor terrorist and organized-crime threats and subversive activities throughout Europe, from Norway to the Middle East and North Africa," Orrock said. "Once the team enters a hostile area, it works with host-nation law-enforcement personnel, security services and others to identify individuals who pose potential threats, he said.

The team was the first of its kind to go into Bosnia and, later, Kosovo, said Orrock, who joined the unit after it returned from Kosovo.

Under the command of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, the ARRC can draw a multinational combat force from nine assigned divisions and corps, representing the most powerful armies in the world, Johnson said.

The ARRC commander has operational control of only one of the nine divisions in peacetime — a combined division composed of Belgian, German, Dutch and British troops — but he has coordinating authority with all of the divisions, including the Germany-based U.S. 1st Armored Division.

To ensure that all participants are fluent in joint doctrine, technology and equipment, the ARRC conducts some 50 exercises and classes annually. On average, each of the divisions participates in a major corps-level exercise every two years, Johnson said.

In October 2001, the ARRC began a process, under the auspices of NATO and Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe, to certify the unit "as a high-readiness, land-force headquarters," Brown said.

"The first step was comparable to the 'Warfighter' exercises that test the readiness of U.S. corps," he said. The computer-assisted exercise was conducted at a British kaserne in

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Sennelager, Germany, and was an internal test of the corps' warfighting procedures. Two SHAPE-conducted garrison inspections were followed by a final evaluation, conducted during a February 2002 exercise, also at Sennelager. The final exercise focused on the corps' range of capabilities and completed the certification process.

The October exercise brought together 3,500 soldiers and various units from throughout NATO to replicate a force of more than 120,000 troops in a computer-aided combat scenario. Participating units included the 1st Armd. Div., one of the ARRC's primary assigned units, as well as units from France, Greece, Poland, Spain, Turkey and Great Britain, Johnson said.

Building an effective team from such diverse units is one of the ARRC's greatest challenges, so field exercises are essential for keeping the headquarters prepared and ready for any contingency, Johnson added. Upon completion of the February exercise, SHAPE evaluators recommended the ARRC for immediate certification to become NATO's first high-readiness force.

The ARRC mobilizes after the North Atlantic Council at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, Belgium, directs the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe, to form a combined, joint military force.

"We go in as part of the initial-entry force," Williams said. "We went into Kosovo behind American, German and British brigades."

On Dec. 20, 1995, the ARRC deployed to Bosnia-Herzegovina to assume command of the multinational divisions positioned in various sectors of the country as the land-component headquarters of the NATO-led Peace Implementation Force for Operation Joint Endeavor.

The ARRC remained in Sarajevo throughout 1996, commanding a multinational, three-division force which, at its peak, consisted of 55,000 troops from 35 nations, Johnson said.

During the two years before it



Translated from the Latin, the words on the distinctive patch worn by members of the ARRC read "Fortune favors the bold."

Heike Hasenauer

RAPID REACTION



SSG Joe Leger updates map information during Exercise Arcade Guard 2002, while his supervisor, a British warrant officer, takes notes.

Jason Lefevre



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Soldiers from some of the 17 NATO-member nations gather for an ARRC planning meeting. The ARRC can draw military assets from a variety of sources.

deployed to Bosnia, the ARRC gathered intelligence on the country's economic, political and military infrastructures in preparation for a possible emergency deployment of troops.

Then, in 1998, the headquarters staff focused on the boiling pot that was Kosovo, planning for contingencies that ranged from a two-corps forced entry to a peacekeeping division commanded by the ARRC.

ARRC elements deployed to Macedonia in February 1999. The remainder of its personnel arrived in March, moving into Kosovo as headquarters for the initial-entry force in June, when a cease-fire agreement was signed.

In Kosovo, Williams wrote operations orders that the multinational brigades executed. "The orders were typically translated into six languages after they were sent out," he said.

"Kosovo reinforced the fact that not everyone speaks English," Williams said. "It taught me that we really need to put

more thought into what we send out, eliminating often-added, but unnecessary, flowery information."

The corps operations plan that's written back at the headquarters in Rheindahlen is similar to the five-paragraph operations orders U.S. soldiers see everyday, Williams continued, "except it's much more detailed."

For the Multinational Brigade, South — the German brigade that was to establish a security sector along the Kosovo-Albanian border — "we war-gamed scenarios and tweaked the ops order before sending it down," Williams said.



Soldiers assigned to ARRC enjoy the best of both country and city life; the headquarters is nestled in a quiet area of town, across the street from a park.

Other ARRC plans included one to register people who were part of the Kosovo Protection Corps and could, therefore, legally carry weapons, Williams said. The plan for the turnover of weapons required the identification of places where they could be destroyed.

Among other challenges the ARRC faced in preparing ops orders was the delayed-movement factor, Williams said. The amount of time it typically takes a unit to move from one point to another didn't apply in Kosovo.

"It always took much longer than we expected, because many bridges had been destroyed in the bombing campaign," he said.

ARRC experts must ask countless questions not only about the destination of the multinational force, what its duties will be and how those will be carried out, but about equipment interoperability.

Different countries' helicopters may have different equipment and specifications, which can mean differences in performance and capability, Williams said. For example, some Italian and Dutch helicopters carry ammunition that differs from that used by other NATO nations.

The ARRC was activated in 1992 in response to NATO's increased involvement in crisis operations that required units that could deploy more rapidly.

Given the current security situation in the world, the ARRC remains ready to fulfill its role as NATO's premier land-component headquarters, and to deploy as needed to perform a wide variety of missions, Johnson said.

Its intense training schedule allows the ARRC to focus on any number of potential missions, ranging from peace-support and humanitarian assistance, to full combat operations, he said. Its operational experience as the initial-entry force in both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo makes it NATO's most diverse and capable land-component headquarters, he added. □